



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

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OVERVIEW

The fishing reports vary, but we are hearing good things about the red drum, black drum, and tautog fishery. We have received numerous tautog donations through the Marine Sportfish Collection Project (MSCP) so far, and we look forward to seeing our freezer overflowing with black drum in the near future.

As soon as we have compiled all of the 2009 age data from the MSCP, we will make it available. Look for an announcement in an upcoming issue of the Saltwater Review.

Anglers should not forget that beginning this Saturday, May 1, and lasting through June 24 the tautog fishery will be closed for the recreational fishery.

Two more weeks until the beginning of the back-to-back weekends for black drum tournaments. First up is the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce's Black Drum World Championship, May 14 and 15 in Cape Charles (go to <http://www.esvachamber.org/events/fishing.asp> for more information). The next event is Chris' Bait and Tackle's Black Drum Tournament, May 22 and 23 in Capeville (on Facebook look up Chris' Bait and Tackle for more information). VMRC's biological staff will be assisting with both tournaments, obtaining length, weight, sex, and age data from all tournament entries.

Finally, tilefish and grouper anglers are reminded that they must have their recreational boat, or charter boat, permitted by VMRC to possess and land tilefish and grouper in Virginia.

If your vessel is already registered with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, or if your charter boat is already registered with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, then you only need to obtain your permit from a MRC Automated Agent:

http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/map_mrcagents.shtml (MRC Automated Agent Locations).

If your vessel is not registered with either VDGIF or VMRC, then please fill-out a Tilefish and Grouper New Vessel Application Form (link below) and follow the instructions on the form so that staff can pre-register your vessel prior to obtaining your permit from a MRC Automated Agent:

http://mrc.virginia.gov/forms/New_Vessel_Registration_for_Tilefish_Grouper_Permit.pdf

Also, ALL permittees are also required to report their catch. This can be done online at one of the following web locations:

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com (for Tilefish and Grouper Recreational Landing Permits)

<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/charter/reports/> (for Tilefish and Grouper Charter Landing Permits)

Already, for 2010, there are 17 recreational vessels and 101 charter vessels permitted for this fishery. Don't forget and get ticketed. Get the permit and remember to report your catch!

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

According to Donna, at Captain Bob's, eel grass and wind have been a problem this week. Despite the poor conditions, Four Mouths and Queen's Sound have been productive flounder areas, while the Assateague Channel action has quieted down. Jumbo minnows and squid have been successful baits, and a few flounder have also been caught using Gulp tipped with jumbo minnow. The biggest catch of the week was a 5-pound, 10-ounce flounder. Donna is gearing up for Captain Bob's Flounder Tournament 2010, which will run from May 7 through May 16.

Onancock

Captain Wil, of Onancock, said that high winds have made it difficult for anglers to get out this week. A few legal-sized flounder were caught in the bay right outside of Onancock. Croaker have not really arrived yet in the area, but there have been a few large catch-and-release striped bass reported.

Wachapreague

This week at the Wachapreague Marina, staff reported a 6-pound tautog. The winning fish from last week's flounder tournament was 8 pounds, 3 ounces, and 26 inches.

According to staff at Captain Zed's, fishing in Wachapreague was good until the wind slowed things down. Anglers were catching a lot of nice flounder (despite numerous throwbacks). All the usual hot spots were producing, including the Hummocks, Cedar Island Cove, Bradfords Channel, Day Marker 134, and Drawing and Green Channels.

Cape Charles

According to Chris at Chris' Bait and Tackle, anglers started catching black drum out of Oyster last week. Red drum were available in the surf, and there are rumors of good catches of flounder out of Oyster. She expects to see black drum in the bay this weekend. She also reminded anglers to reserve their spots in the upcoming black drum tournament.

Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel

Staff at Wallace's Bait and Tackle reported flounder and tautog catches over the past week. The best tautog action was from the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

According to staff at the York River Fishing Center, croaker are numerous in the area. Speckled trout are also around, and last week, a 6-pound, 2-ounce citation speckled trout was weighed in. At the Gloucester Point Pier, anglers are enjoying the croaker run.

Ken Neill, of the Peninsula Anglers Club and IGFA representative, contributed the following:

Red drum fishing is red hot. Bull reds are being pulled from the surf line along Fisherman's and Smith Islands. Most of these fish are caught on bait fished on the bottom, but keep a good lookout and have a jig ready to cast. Roaming schools of big reds are providing some sight-casting opportunities. Small- to medium-sized black drum are being caught in the same area and inside some of the seaside inlets. Look for the first citation-sized fish to be caught this week. The black drum bite should be in full force for the Black Drum World Championship in a couple of weeks (www.esvachamber.org/events/fishing.asp). Flounder continue to be caught in all of the normal flounder spots. That fishery has not been red hot with a lot of short fish caught. There are enough keepers and a few doormats around to keep anglers interested. This fishery will continue to get better as the waters continue to warm. Some larger flounder have been caught from the Buoy 36A area on up to Buoy 42. Croaker are biting in the rivers from the James to the Rappahannock, with the occasional fish pushing the 3-pound mark. The speckled trout fishery in the Mobjack Bay basin has started to turn on. Tautog are going out with a bang. The tautog season is closed as of May 1. May 1 also marks the opening of the two-week trophy striped bass season. You are allowed to keep one rockfish, at least 32 inches long, per person, per day. Small bluefish are roaming throughout the lower bay. Large bluefish are on the offshore seamounts with the first citation-sized bluefish of the year caught on the Cigar. Offshore bottom fishing out of Virginia has not been great this year. Blueline tilefish citations are at a fraction of what they were at this time last year. This is due in large part to the black sea bass closure that has kept many boats from heading out there. It is also due to the fact that fishing is just not as good as it has been the past several years. The dog sharks will be leaving and the sea bass fishery will open back up May 22 (unless something else changes). There will be more offshore bottom fishing activity once this happens. The pelagic fishing season is just heating up out of Virginia. Tuna fishing continues to be good out of Oregon Inlet. This past week, boats from Virginia got in on the action by running to the Triple O's area. They found good numbers of bluefin and yellowfin tuna, plus some mako sharks.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The spring mid-Atlantic fishing scene is escalating, with catches improving almost everywhere. The biggest interest is still in the emerging drum bite, which is motivating anglers to head for the shallow water off the barrier islands of the Eastern Shore. Big red drum over 45 inches in length are providing decent early season action among the breakers off of Smith and Fisherman's Islands. Peeler crabs, blue crabs, and bunker fished on the bottom will give you a shot at tangling with a bull red. Several boats are releasing multiple fish per outing this week, and the action will only improve over the weeks ahead.

Smallish black drum, ranging around 35 pounds, are becoming more active in the Eastern Shore

seaside inlets and near Latimer Shoal on the bayside. The larger fish will begin hitting in bay waters soon.

The flounder bite is still hit and miss, with plenty of undersized fish frustrating anglers. Scattered keepers are rewarding those who put in their time, especially in the Eastern Shore seaside inlets, Oyster, Magothy Bay, and Back River Reef. Some decent keepers ranging to 23 inches are coming from both Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets, with a few bigger fish pushing to around 6 pounds also in the mix. Strip bait and jigged Gulp grubs are performing best.

Although tautog become off limits on May 1, the bay's Spring Trophy Striped Bass season opens on the same day. Anglers working top water lures along the rocks at the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel can find fish exceeding the 32-inch minimum, while school-sized fish are available around the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. Anglers can keep one fish per person at 32-inches or larger.

The lower bay rivers are still holding the larger croaker, while the Little Creek jetties and Ocean View are hosting medium-sized hardheads, which are hitting squid and shrimp. The folks at the Ocean View Fishing Pier report that the best croaker action is still at night.

Snapper and Taylor bluefish are all over the lower bay, especially within the inlets, where anglers are experiencing excellent catches of decent blues averaging up to six pounds. A few choppers are allegedly in the mix, as one angler reports that he released a 36-inch bluefish for a state citation while throwing lures in Rudee Inlet this week. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still available in most bayside and seaside inlets, while speckled trout will also take offerings in many of these same areas.

Golden tilefish, grouper, and other deepwater bottom species are still available in water over 50 fathoms near the Canyon. As the dogfish begin to move out this month, more boats will venture to shallower water around the 50 fathom curve to target blueline tilefish.

Offshore action is heading our way. A few boats from Virginia testing the warmer water offshore found decent yellowfin tuna action, along with some nice bluefin tuna this past week.

Virginia Middle Bay

Johnny, with Jett's Hardware, reports that striped bass continue to be caught in Maryland waters. There have not been many reports of croaker being caught, but that should be changing as the weather continues to warm.

Butch, with Garrett's Marina, said the wind has impacted fishing the last few days, but charters have started to run again. Hopefully the catches will show a continuation of larger croaker downriver. The upriver areas have seen some smaller croaker, and the larger ones should be moving up soon. Some striped bass were reported at the mouth of the Rappahannock River as well.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Flounder are being caught from Cape Charles north to Buoy 42 and are starting to show along the western shore with fish caught around Gwynn's Island. Croaker are biting well in the Rappahannock and Piankatank rivers and are also in the creeks. We weighed our earliest speckled trout citation ever on Saturday, April 24. The 5-pound, 8-ounce, 24-inch fish, along with five other keepers, were caught inside Winter Harbor. With schools of small menhaden in the creeks and river mouths, the bluefish won't be far behind.

Virginia Beach

Fishing has picked up in the inlet near the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. Anglers are finding plenty of Taylor bluefish, a few speckled trout and puppy drum, and flounder over 20 inches in length. On the nearby beaches, anglers are reporting a few croaker, and from the Bay, flounder, tautog, and cod were reported. Offshore, large bluefin tuna (well over 100 pounds) continue to be hooked, and deep dropping has been doing very well with grouper, tilefish, wreckfish, barrelfish, and blackbellied rosefish.

Virginia Piers

At the Ocean View Pier, anglers hooked croaker, sea mullet, flounder, and puffers last week.

It was blustery at the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier last week. While a few sea mullet and skate were hooked, staff hopes that the warm weather will bring water temperatures back up to better fishing levels by next week.

At the Little Island Fishing Pier, at Sandbridge, a few bluefish and skate were hooked last week.

Staff at the Buckroe Fishing Pier reported a slow week. Numerous blue crabs were stealing bait off of the lines, and a few croaker were hooked overnight.

Outer Banks, NC

The bluefin tuna bite has slowed down considerably from the Nags Head compared to the previous few weeks. Bonito, dolphin, wahoo, yellowfin, and blackfin tuna were also absent from most anglers creels. Bottom fishing in the deeper waters was giving the anglers something to brag about with amberjack, tilefish, and snowy grouper. Closer to shore, striped bass were hanging out around eight miles offshore, and the artificial reefs saw black sea bass, sheepshead, tautog, and triggerfish. Nearshore trolling was producing bluefish with red drum and sea mullet outside the breakers. Good catches of puffers, sea mullet, red drum, and speckled trout were reported off of the piers. Inshore, anglers saw the speckled trout bite improve with some sheepshead and black drum in their usual haunts.

South of Oregon Inlet, bluefish were biting, especially in the evening with Ramp 43 rumored to be a good spot. A few puppy drum (juvenile red drum) and flounder were found around the point, and sea mullet and spot were caught on the northern beaches.

Offshore fishing off of Hatteras saw limited action due to strong southwest winds; the boats that did go out concentrated on nearshore bottom fishing. Amberjack, black sea bass, and triggerfish could all be found in

angler's coolers.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.











Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM	TAUTOG
				
KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	TILEFISH (BLUELINE OR GOLDEN)	WRECKFISH, SNOWY GROUPER, WARSAW GROUPER	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
				

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)
Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)



VIRGINIA SALTWATER Fisherman's Journal



Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.

The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community

to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

Individual measurement of caught, and released, on the most highly prized fish, such as red drum, striped bass, and summer flounder, provides a greater benefit to everyone. This past year, data from volunteer angler surveys were an important component in the calculation to reduce size limits for summer flounder in Virginia. However, Virginia data from Virginia anglers have not yet reached the level needed to stand alone. If the ability to reduce the size limit occurs in the future, the catch-and-release information on undersized summer flounder would be of great benefit.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions, and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal" and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

◆ Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:

- Fish
- Birds
- Marine Mammals
- Boaters and swimmers

◆ Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!

◆ Contact the VMRC to sponsor additional bins your area



VMRC Managed Locations*

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton
Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague
Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles
Don's Bait and Tackle, Wachapreague
Lancaster County (multiple locations)
Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach
Newport News (multiple locations)
Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk
Wallace's Bait and Tackle, Hampton

*DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia

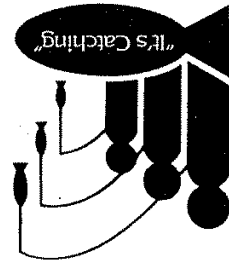
The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation and the Virginia Aquarium.

If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov.



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Practice

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REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water